

probable [like the strange Water Insect, from whence a Gnat is produced, mentioned by the Learned Dr. *Hook* in his *Micrographia*, whose Metamorphosis I have often with pleasure seen] may afterwards turn into Flies or winged Insects of the same species with the Animal Parent. And perhaps sometimes *both* these Circumstances, and *others* of the like Nature, concur for their Production.

Account of a BOOK.

Parochial Antiquities, *Attempted in the History of Ambrosden, Burcester, and other adjacent Parts in the Counties of Oxford and Bucks.* By *White Kennet*, Vicar of *Ambrosden*. At the Theatre in *Oxford*, in 1695. in 4°.

THIS Book is the first of the Kind that has been Published, either in our own Language, or in any other that I know of. The Author (who has formerly Published *Somner's Life*) has pursued the following Method.

I. He has given us an Account of what Footsteps he could discover of the several Inhabitants of this Island, before the *Norman Conquest*, within the Bounds of those Parishes, which he propos'd to treat of.

As of the *Britains*, Chap. 1.

Romans, ——— 2.

Garrisons, 3.

Coins 4.

High-ways 5.

Customs 6.

Saxons ——— 7.

Danes ——— 8.

Saxons restored 9.

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II. From

II. From the *Norman Conquest*, he has proceeded by way of Annals, giving an exact Account, under the several Years, of the Descent of Families, the Conveyance of Estates, and other Occurrences, which seem'd material towards the full Illustration of the History of those Parts.

III. He has given us the History of the *Roman City Alchester*, near *Bisfer*, compos'd in the Year 1622. by a Learned *Antiquary*, who had both Judgment and Opportunities, to make proper Observations upon these Remains of Antiquity.

IV. We have the Prospects of the most considerable Seats in those Parts.

V. To these is added a General Index, of the Names of Persons and Places.

VI. A Glossary, explaining the Obsolete *Words* and *Phrases* which occur in the Original Charters and Records, set down in their proper Places; some Hundreds of which were never mentioned in any Glossary.

This, in short, is the Substance of the *Work*; which (upon reading of the Title-page) I presum'd would only concern the Inhabitants of the several Parishes describ'd. But upon a farther Examination of the Book, I find it so managed by the Learned Author, as to be of great use to the Lovers of Antiquity in general. For

I. It is an excellent Pattern of any ingenious Gentleman, that shall think fit to search into the Antiquities of his Native place, and the Neighbourhood (and it is none of the easiest things to find out a proper Method, how to digest such a confusion of Matter, as one is necessarily engag'd in by such an Undertaking.) But this is not all: As the Counties of *England* were divided into Parishes, at the same time, and for the same Ends; so the Customs and Government of them all, is the same
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in the main. By which means, the Undertakers of *Parochial Antiquities* in other Parts of *England*, comparing the Constitutions of the several Places they are to treat of, with what our Author has observ'd within *His* Province; are led to the Reasons and Originals of a great many things, which might either have wholly escap'd their Notice, or not have been so exactly understood; or at best, have cost them infinitely more Pains in the search. And 'tis pity, that all the parts of *England* should not be Illustrated by so many Designs of this nature. If that were once begun, we might hope for an exact knowledge, as well of the *Antiquities*, as of the *Civil-Constitution* of the Kingdom. For those who live in the respective places, and have daily opportunities of making their own Observations, and of picking up the Remains of Antiquity, with the Traditional Accounts about them; are the only Men that can furnish us with exact Accounts of the *British*, *Roman*, *Saxon*, and *Danish* Antiquities. And I doubt not, but there are several Footsteps of our old Laws and Customs, still to be found in many parts of *England*; which (if they were once made known to the World) would give us a good insight into our ancient Government and Constitutions. But besides these advantages, there are some others, which (methinks) should induce the Gentry to *Encourage*, and the Parochial Clergy to *pursue* Undertakings of this kind.

I. For the Gentry: It must needs be a pleasant piece of Entertainment to them, to understand the History of their own Estates; and it is also a decent respect to the memory of their Ancestors, to inform themselves by whose care it was, that such fair Inheritances have been handed down to them; to know, by whose Prudence their Estates have grown, and by whose Courage and Conduct their Families have been adorn'd. *Cicero*

(I remember) does somewhere give a very contemptible Character, of a sort of Men, that can be content to live and die, without ever troubling their Heads with what passed in the World before they came into it. And if the Censure be just, the more nearly we are concerned in any thing that has passed in former Ages, the more inexcusable is our Ignorance of it. But besides the satisfaction to themselves, and respect to their Ancestors, a good acquaintance with the Constitutions and Customs of their Neighbourhood in all Ages, does better enable them to compose Differences among Neighbours, and qualify them for the more regular Administration of Justice: It makes them a sort of Oracles in the Places where they live.

2. For the Parochial Clergy : It is no new thing to observe, that both they and the Church have been great Sufferers, for want of this sort of Knowledge. Men of ill Designs (taking advantage of the frequent removes of Incumbents, and their Ignorance of the Affairs and Usages of their Parish) will be always trying to improve their own Estates, out of the Revenues of the Church. And there's no way to prevent this effectually, till some one or other make an exact search into the Records of the respective Places, and digest the Notices they meet with into regular Method, for the use of Posterity. It was a Case wherein the Rights of the Church were concerned, that first moved this worthy Gentleman to such an Undertaking; and the Success he had in that particular, led him on to farther searches, convincing him how useful such a Work was like to prove both to himself and his Successors. † It seems an Annual Benefaction † *Præfat.* had been given to the Church of *Ambrosden*, for the Repairing and adorning of it for ever: This had been for time perverted to other uses. At last he

he discovered the Abuse; and evidently proved it to be such, by a diligent search into Records, and the ancient Usages of the Place. Upon a fair Hearing, Judgment was given, That the old Feoffees should refund the several Sums that had been irregularly employed, and that new Feoffees should be Constituted to prevent the like abuses for the future. This was the Abuse, and by this means it was regulated; which, as it succeeded here, so would it be the most effectual way to reform and prevent such miscarriages for the future.

II. There is another thing which I observe, which makes the Book of more general Use, than the Title seems to imply, and that is, The numbers of Original Charters and Instruments, given us entire by the Author, from whence considerable Additions may be made to the *Monasticon Anglicanum* of Sir William Dugdale. 'Tis possible, there are some that may think the Publishing of these at large an incumbrance to the Work; but I wish all other Books were swell'd to as good purpose. Where Men consult nothing in Reading, but their own Pleasure and Diversion, there indeed a neat superficial account of things does best serve the turn; but if they aim at Truth, original Instruments do certainly afford the best Instructions: they give us a much clearer Apprehension of things, and leave a far more lasting Impression upon the Memory, than the best penn'd History in the World.

III. We find here and there, dispersed in the Body of the Book, several Discourses by way of Digression, relating chiefly to Ecclesiastical Matters: (as *Pag. 19.*) *Concerning the ancient method of dividing the Tithes*; *Pag. 105.* *A Confutation of our Selden, about the Arbitrary disposal of Tithes by Lay Patrons*: *Pag. 413.* *a large Account of the Rise and Growth of Appropriations*: *Pag. 581. to Pag. 614.* *a long Discourse concerning the Dignity of Mother Churches*; *Pag. 632. to Pag. 653.*

Of the Dignity, Office, &c. of Rural Deans. These and many others are occasionally inserted in the Book, as hints and occurrences within the Limits he treats of, gave the Author an Opportunity of delivering his Judgment that upon the respective Heads, the subject of them is such no Clergy-man at least can be suppos'd to think himself unconcerned in; and the Discourses are the more valuable, because some of the Heads were never treated of before; and the Accounts of those that have, are not the Notions and Opinions of other Men, but the Effects of the Authors own Observations drawn from Original Records.

IV. Throughout the whole Work we find considerable Corrections and Improvements upon several Authors, who carrying on general Designs, could not be supposed to be free from slips; or being at too great a Distance, had not an Opportunity of examining the original Instruments, as in the Case of Dr. *Fildesly* against *Selden*, p. 135.) It were to be wished that all Writers would observe the same Method, and give us an Account of the Mistakes which they have noted in other Authors, as they fall in with the particular Subject they are treating of.

V. The Author has taken care to rectify matters of fact (relating to the Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories of the Kingdom) which before had been generally mistaken.

VI. The Glossary, at the end, is not only an Account of *Words* and *Phrases*, but also an explication of ancient *Customs*, *Laws*, and *Manners*. From hence Sir *H. Spelman's* Glossary might be very well enlarg'd; which is a sufficient recommendation of it, to those who understand how capable that Book is of Improvements, and how much it would be for the Honour of our Nation to have it once completed.